

## **DEVELOPING LANGUAGE LEARNERS' APPLIED COMPETENCE: LANGUAGE AS A STRATEGIC RESOURCE IN ORGANISATIONS**

Willfred J. Greyling  
Department of English and Classical Languages  
University of the Free State  
P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein  
9301  
e-mail address: greywj.hum@mail.uovs.ac.za

### **ABSTRACT**

SA Ministry of Education documentation clearly states that applied competence is a key construct (among many) to be pursued in education. Thus, the learner has to develop foundational competence (i.e. theoretical knowledge), practical competence (i.e. the practical application of knowledge), and reflexive competence (i.e. reflecting on the relationship between foundational and practical competencies) within an integrative framework. It is argued in this article that Hardy and Palmer's 1998 discourse-based management model is such a tool that can be used to develop language and other learners' applied competence. The focus here is on a group of third-year university students enrolled for a course in discourse analysis for the professions. One of the primary outcomes of the course was to raise these language learners' awareness of how language can be exploited as a strategic resource in managing organisations. Against the backdrop that language is a context-embedded vehicle for goal-directed communication, the study focused on learners' knowledge of and skills in applying Hardy and Palmer's model in two contexts. First, learners were required to use the model in a post-hoc analysis of the HIV/AIDS awareness organisation, loveLife. The aim was to illustrate how the circuits of the model could be used to make sense of the discursive evidence on the organisation's web site. Second, on the basis of the preceding analysis, learners had to imagine and anticipate how they would use the model in pursuing change in loveLife. This a priori and future-orientated analysis had to be articulated in terms of the circuits of Hardy and Palmer's model.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A key construct in Ministry of Education documentation, applied competence, encapsulates three sub-competencies, namely, foundational, practical and reflexive competence. Foundational competence, it is stated, denotes the relevant theoretical

knowledge required in a specific learning area. Practical competence again focuses on the learner's relevant practical application of such knowledge. Last, reflexive competence refers to the learner's ability to reflect on and redefine the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical applications. These competencies should not be seen as separate; rather, they are interwoven as an interactive and integrative whole (cf. RSA MoE, Government Gazette, February 2000, Vol. 415, no. 20844, p. 7; Strydom and Van der Westhuizen, 2001: 104-105).

The main aim of this article is to provide an outline of, and reflect on, a step-by-step procedure which was used to develop learners' applied competence as they focused on the importance of language as a strategic resource in managing and changing organisations. From an OBE perspective, in all learning fields, learners' effectiveness and efficiency as lifelong learners - and therefore, as future employees - are contingent on their communicative competence in context as they develop and exhibit what Spady refers to as life-role functioning and complex role performances (Spady, 1994: 62). Indeed, communicative competence in various contexts is consistently listed as a critical (or the less recent critical cross-field) outcome to be sought in curricula (cf. RSA MoE, the Revised Curriculum Statement 2005: ch 1, p. 1) and qualifications (cf. RSA MoE, A New Academic Policy for Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in HE, January 2002: pp. 20; 31). This approach also ties in with the notion of recontextualisation in Critical Discourse Analysis: How do language users draw on their current competence in various discourse types and discursive skills as they face new contexts that require goal-directed communication (cf. Scheuer, 2003: 144)?

From yet another perspective, the approach in this paper was intended to be consistent with Content-Based Instruction (Brinton & Holten, 1997: 1-16; Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 137; cf. among others, NASA's web site for integrated language and content courses) which "integrates the learning of language with the learning of some other content". Following this notion, we pursued the secondary, yet important objective that mastery of Hardy and Palmer's discourse-based management model was one side

of the coin: the other was that learners had to master information that would raise their awareness of critical issues and values in modern society, among others, poverty relief and child care (i.e. the *Mère et Enfant* example), the role of the Cancer Association in SA (i.e. CANSA) and the loveLife campaign aimed at raising S.A. youths' awareness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (cf. RSA MoE, Values in Education Programme of Action, 2002). This approach, we believe, is consistent too with the critical outcome which stipulates that graduates have to demonstrate "an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation" (cf. RSA MoE, A New Academic Policy for Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in HE, January 2002: pp 20).

The rest of this article<sup>1</sup> focuses attention on various aspects of research methodology, findings and a conclusion. First, the methodological orientation is presented, with specific reference to two qualitative methods, namely, the case study (cf. Yin, 1994) and action learning (cf. Zuber-Skerritt & Farquhar, 2002; and Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). In the section on methodology, an outline is also provided of the cycle of implementation for purposes of assisting research consumers who might want to replicate the study; the application of Hardy and Palmer's model to an NGO in Palestine (Hardy and Palmer, 1998); and the specifics of data collection and analysis relating to the target population of learners and their responses reported on in this article. Then follow a report of the findings and a conclusion.

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION**

The research methodology derives from two qualitative methods, the case study and action learning. The case study was seen as an appropriate qualitative method that could be used to collect tangible evidence of individual learner mastery of Hardy and Palmer's discourse model. Moreover, learners' discursive accounts in response to two

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<sup>1</sup> Both reviewers suggested that the logical order of the section on research methodology be reconsidered, and that signposting be added to assist the reader. This paragraph and the next section were therefore revised to accommodate their much appreciated suggestions and feedback.

assignments on the SA AIDS-awareness organisation, loveLife, would serve as evidence of the facilitator's attempt to **promote learners' applied competence**. The discursive evidence, it was argued, would be captured in the form of learners' unique arguments as they reconstructed past events and envisaged future scenarios for the organisation, loveLife. These arguments would show whether learners had mastered the three circuits of Hardy and Palmer's model or not. The second focus was action learning (cf Zuber-Skerritt and Farquhar, 2002: 102-113; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 114-124). Action learning is defined as "learning from concrete experience and critical reflection on that experience – through group discussion, trial and error, discovery, and learning from and with each other", driven by insight-seeking questions and creative thinking (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 114-115). Our approach was consistent with these premises, we reasoned, and would accommodate theoretical learning, practical application and reflective analysis (outlined in similar terms in Zuber-Skerritt and Farquhar, 2002, 105-108). These premises were consistent too with the OBE notion of pursuing an integrated or applied competence (cf. MoE, Government Gazette, February 2000, Vol. 415, no. 20844, p. 7; Strydom and Van der Westhuizen, 2001: 104-105).

Second, for the sake of other researchers wanting to **replicate the study**, the **teaching cycle** that was employed, is sketched next. In a lecture setting, the facilitator provided an overview of Hardy and Palmer (1998), followed by a facilitator-guided critical-reflective analysis of the Cancer Association of South Africa's web site on the basis of Hardy and Palmer's model. The actual task assigned to students was the following:

**Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) Scenario:**

In a five-page essay, specify the concepts, objects and subjects that are relevant to CANSA. Place these in the context of Hardy and Palmer's model. Moreover, in a brief response, show how you would use the model to implement change in the organisation.

Learner inputs were used as the basis for a facilitator-guided analysis of CANSA, and during the session, students were also guided through a sample response produced by the facilitator (cf. Appendix A). This process of mediating skills and knowledge ultimately led to the next phase of autonomous learner activity in which they were required to replicate the CANSA analysis in an independent analysis of loveLife.

Learners were also provided with a mediated and amplified outline of Hardy and Palmer's 1998 publication which deals with three circuits: the circuits of activity, performativity and connectivity. In Hardy and Palmer's article, these circuits refer to a specific context, namely, change management activities affecting an NGO, Mére et Enfant, in the Gaza Strip in Palestine. The Delegate (referred to as such to protect his identity as the representative of a European government) was prompted by an evaluation team from head-office to localise the NGO. Following the global trend to localise, they advised him to pursue this strategy. In the **circuit of activity**, the Delegate introduced the concept of localisation by way of a steering committee consisting of local stakeholders. Their task was to provide local input in the management process. In the **circuit of performativity**, all stakeholders displayed **receptivity**: they were committed to the idea of involving locals in managing the organisation. The steering committee became the **symbol of localisation** as locals were to take co-responsibility for the management of the organisation (Hardy & Palmer, 1998: 6-8).

When the first outcome of this localisation process led to the steering committee and the Delegate rationalising staff, the so-affected individuals argued that, as a localised organisation, the NGO fell under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. These individuals' complaints led to the security forces, who took the same position, becoming embroiled in the process. When the security forces began to harass the remaining members of staff at the NGO, the Delegate argued that the **circuit of connectivity** had yielded a most undesirable outcome. He immediately activated the next cycle of the model, introducing the concept of delocalisation. Eventually, the NGO reverted to its international status. See figure 1 below for a diagrammatic outline of the localisation cycle:

Figure 1: The Model Applied – The Localisation of Mère et Enfant

Circuits	Theoretical constructs	Application to Mère et Enfant
<b>Circuits of activity</b>	Introducing a new concept captured in objects and symbols.	The delegate introduces a new concept, localisation. A steering committee serves as symbol of the concept.
	Attempts to associate object with a particular concept	He articulates his concept in letters and other documents, attempting to change the NGO from an <b>international to a localised</b> organisation.
<b>Circuits of performativity</b>	Concepts possess periodisation and contextualisation	The concept of localisation makes sense in the period (i.e. as an international trend) and context.
	Subject position of the enunciator warrants voice	The subject position of the enunciator (the Delegate) warrants voice (i.e. has legitimacy). So has the newly formed steering committee.
	Symbols, narratives, metaphors, and the like possess receptivity	Stakeholders are receptive to localisation. The symbol (the steering committee) possesses receptivity as the members are willing to engage in the process.
<b>Circuits of connectivity</b>	Discursive statements “take” or “kick in”, connecting object and concept in a specific situation	Discursive statements “take”, connecting object and concept in a specific situation.
	New subject positions and practices emerge.	New subject positions emerge - steering committee and security forces take new positions and display new practices.
	Accumulation of new statements/practices influences future discursive activities.	The Delegate responds to security force harassment <b>as connectivity has not been achieved.</b>
<b>Circuits of activity</b>	The delegate makes new discursive statements (completing one cycle and going on to the next cycle)	The Delegate makes new discursive statements re <b>delocalisation.</b>

The shift in emphasis in the instructional phase noted above, it was argued, would be from facilitator-mediated responses (i.e. dependence) in dealing with CANSA to independent learner responses (i.e. learner autonomy) in their analysing loveLife, an approach consistent with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and Bruner's scaffolding,<sup>2</sup> as well as the premises of action learning (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). This pursuit of learner autonomy is also noted as a key construct in MoE documentation (cf. RSA MoE, Government Gazette, February 2000, Vol. 415, no. 20844, p. 7).

Next, Hardy and Palmer's model was used as a **framework for assessing learner responses: at a meta-level of critical-reflective thinking, were they able independently to master and apply the model in both a post-hoc and an a priori analysis of loveLife?** In these analyses, learners were required to chart back, on the basis of the current discursive evidence on the loveLife web site, the courses of action pursued by the organisation in the past (i.e. the post-hoc analysis) and how the current discursive account could be used to generate an anticipated future scenario (i.e. the a priori analysis), an approach akin not only to the strategic design process outlined in Spady (1997: chapter 7), but also to an action-learning and constructivist approach premised on the notion that learners learn when they engage their frames of reference as they produce novel discursive accounts of a future scenario (cf. Zuber-Skerritt and Farquhar, 2002, and Zuber-Skerritt, 2002, on action learning; as well as Blyth, 1997, 50-66 on a constructivist approach to language teaching; or see Kelly, 1955, for a personal constructs approach). The loveLife assignment, quoted directly below, was meant to expose these learners to a task that would require and develop independent and novel thinking:

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<sup>2</sup> Vygotsky's approach in pursuing the ZPD is aimed at establishing a level of difficulty as a first step. Then follows assisted, and in the context of this paper, facilitator-mediated learner performance. The third step is for the facilitator to evaluate learners' independent performance, which is the primary objective of the ZPD (cf. Moll, 1994: 7). See also Van Lier (1996: 190-199) on the ZPD and Bruner's concept of scaffolding, or the original publications (Vygotsky, 1978; and Bruner, 1979). Learner autonomy, it has to be noted, prompted us to focus on Hardy and Palmer's model as a tool that learners, once mastered, could use as an interpretative framework in taking charge of their learning and real-life functioning (cf. also McCarthy, 1998; Thanasoulas, 2002; and Chuk, 2003, among many others). The means to achieve learner autonomy derive, among others, from scaffolding techniques which are predicated on teacher mediation (cf. the relationships among terms such as mediation as well as experiential and action learning are outlined in a cryptic, yet useful mind map found on the University of Tasmania web site on scaffolding, **Children, on-line learning and authentic teaching skills in primary education**).

### **loveLife assignment**

Use the loveLife organisation as a case study to illustrate (a) the usefulness of Hardy and Palmer's model in reflecting on the organisation's past, and (b) if you were in charge of the organisation, how you would apply Hardy and Palmer's model in effecting future change in the organisation.

**Data collection and analysis** were performed as follows. First, all the responses produced by the 16 students registered for the course were collected and are lodged with the author. The following checklist was not only given to students as a critical-reflective framework for judging their responses prior to submission, but was also used as a qualitative framework for analysing their responses (including the assessment process):

#### **Checklist for assignment 1: Part a**

1. Did you couch the analysis in the form of a post-hoc analysis of loveLife (i.e. looking back from the present to the past)?
  - 1.1 Did you interpret the discursive evidence on the web site as evidence of connectivity of a concept or concepts?
  - 1.2 Did you start with the circuit of connectivity and did you work back to the preceding circuits?
  - 1.3 Throughout your reasoning, did you refer to the discursive evidence on the web site?
2. Circuit of connectivity
  - 2.1 Did you define connectivity?
  - 2.2 Did you refer to the discursive evidence?
  - 2.3 Did you show that there was tangible evidence of positive outcomes that derive from a concept?
3. Circuit of performativity
  - 3.1 Did you refer to context and period for the concepts you identified? Did you define these terms?
  - 3.2 Did you refer to receptivity? Did you define the concept in relation to loveLife?
  - 3.3 Did you define the concept stakeholders (or subjects) involved in loveLife?
  - 3.4 Did you show the relationship among subjects, objects and concepts?
  - 3.5 Did you use the notions of "legitimate voices" and "new practices and activities" in your analysis? Did you define the concepts and did you then relate them to your analysis?
4. Circuit of activity
  - 3.1 Did you identify the concept or concepts that have driven loveLife?
  - 3.2 Who were the stakeholders?
  - 3.3 What objects and symbols were anticipated by stakeholders?
5. General question:
  - 5.1 Did you refer to the discursive evidence?
  - 5.2 Did you define the terms of the model before using them in your model?
  - 5.3 Did you argue a case on the basis of discursive evidence on the web site?
  - 5.4 Did you check your presentation?
  - 5.5 Did you discuss problems you encountered with the lecturer concerned?



For part b of the assignment, students were required to use the same checklist, except that para. 2 and 4, as well as the sequence of questions - and the circuits - referred to in 1.1 to 1.3 had to be reversed. The main focus of the analysis was to establish how students reasoned as they used the model to assign meaning to the loveLife web site.

In conclusion, we may argue that the findings reported below provide an account of student connectivity of task, theory and practical analysis. Indeed, several students remarked in workshop sessions that the model could be used in a variety of contexts to judge change management objectives ranging from the personal and the individual to organisational, and even politico-social, contexts.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. FINDINGS

Student responses to the task provided tangible evidence that they were able to use Hardy and Palmer's model in both a *post-hoc* and an *a priori* analysis. We report on these two focal points in the analyses in the sections that follow.

#### 3.1 A post-hoc analysis of loveLife

As stated earlier, learners were required to invert the sequence of the circuits in Hardy and Palmer's model, analysing the web site as a source of discursive evidence of connectivity. This evidence, it was argued, could be used to infer the details of the earlier circuits of performativity and activity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hardy and Palmer's model may be used as a framework for generating narrative accounts in a multitude of contexts. These would remain narrative accounts that are subject to being retold. The framework allows for the mutability of narrative accounts – multiple accounts of the same "facts" are possible. For the usefulness of storytelling in organisations, and the leverage these provide to secure buy-in, see Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak (2005). It should be noted too that the author used Hardy and Palmer's model in describing how the current incorporation process in the HE sector was managed in an unnamed department at his institution of origin. These details are reported in Greyling (forthcoming) *Managing an incorporation at departmental level in the higher education sector: Discourse as a strategic resource*, in **South African Journal of Higher Education**, Vol. 19/2.

<sup>4</sup> It is not suggested that the two organisations used Hardy and Palmer (1998) in their strategic planning; rather, learners were required to look at the two organisations, reconstructing their past histories on the basis of the model, and then speculating about changes they would introduce (i.e. a critical-reflective and speculative construction of future events) using the model as a framework for monitoring changes that learners generated in an imagined context.

Thus, the **circuit of connectivity** refers to the tangible evidence that stakeholders, involved in the organisation, have achieved the outcomes they verbalised (i.e. the notions of discursive statements “kicking in” and the stakeholders’ walking their talk). Students were expected to outline and refer to discursive evidence of connectivity for concepts introduced in the **circuit of activity**. If connectivity was in evidence, they could reason that at least some – if not most – of the stakeholders would have been receptive to the concepts; thus, connectivity implied that the **circuit of performativity** had been adequately successful. Below, it is shown how this pattern of inverse reasoning was in evidence in two learners’ responses.<sup>5</sup>

**Student 1’s reasoning** is captured in the following quotations:

- (1.1) Let us consider the **circuit of connectivity** for the concept “effective youth-targeted HIV prevention”. If we click on the **national survey** option, we are taken to loveLife’s national survey web site, a **symbol** of the objective effectively to target the youth in HIV prevention. The following **objects** are evidence of connectivity: Firstly, the loveLife full national survey report provides the framework and basis for targeting the youth ... [quote from Student 1’s response]
- (1.2) When one considers the **circuit of performativity**, it can be deduced that the loveLife campaign managers must have established a system for collecting and collating statistics for the national survey... [quote from Student 1’s response]
- (1.3) In the **circuit of activity**, someone must have thought of the concept, “effective youth-targeted HIV prevention”, and must have decided that a national survey would be a suitable symbol to link the concept and its objects ... [quote from Student 1’s response]

The student’s reasoning is that the national survey is tangible evidence (i.e. a discursive object) confirming that campaign managers and other stakeholders were receptive to the concept, “effective youth-targeted HIV prevention”. Student 1 is aware of the fact that the national survey was an important step in pursuing this concept – without reliable information about SA’s youth, the HIV awareness campaign would have been based on guessing. From the point of view of connectivity, student 1 argues that

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<sup>5</sup> For the sake of space, excerpts are included from two students’ responses. Following the rule of retrievability, we have retained photocopies of all these responses at the author’s institution.

verified statistics show that respondents' awareness of the scourge had at least been raised:

- (1.4) **Is loveLife working?** loveLife answers by saying that although the organisation's effectiveness cannot really be measured as it is too early for evidence, they note the following statistics:
- 89 % of respondents said loveLife was good for the youth of South Africa;
  - 82 % agreed that more open communication about sex, sexuality and gender relations could help reduce the risks of HIV/AIDS; and
  - 76 % said loveLife had made them aware of the risks of unprotected sex.
- [quote from Student 1's response]

Thus, it seems that student 1 has reasoned that the **concept** "youth-targeted HIV prevention", activated in the **circuit of activity**, required, as a preliminary step, that campaigners obtain reliable information about the target population. Perhaps a contending interpretation of the student's reasoning would be that, prior to deciding on the above-mentioned concept, the concept activated here was "seeking reliable information about the target population", prompting the further interpretation that clusters of concepts are activated in any application of the model, even if a single concept is claimed to have been introduced at a conscious level. Moreover, if we consider the mission statements of organisations, they tend to form clusters of concepts targeted for implementation (see the introduction to Appendix A for the cluster of concepts encapsulated in CANSA's mission statement).

Student 1 focuses on the receptivity of the campaign managers only, ignoring other stakeholders such as the community, parents, educators, health-care practitioners, national health and the country's youth. In the **circuit of performativity**, the stakeholders would include more than the managers of the awareness campaign. The receptivity of both the campaigners and the youth would have been critical in the design, dissemination, completion and processing of the survey data. In (1.4) above, we see that the outcome of the national survey yielded tangible evidence that the requirements for successfully engaging in the **circuit of connectivity** (i.e. the starting point of the post-hoc analysis) had been met.

**Student 2's response** focuses more on loveLife's success at raising SA youth's awareness of the HIV pandemic. Again three excerpts are quoted from the student's response:

- (1.5) In the case of loveLife, after about a year of building brand awareness through the initial advertising campaign, more than two-thirds of South Africans could correctly recognise and identify the loveLife brand (see <http://www.lovelife.org.za> (i.e. evidence of **connectivity**)... [quote from Student 2's response]
- (1.6) Hardy and Palmer state that concepts should possess periodisation and contextualisation. The concept of **responsible sexual activity** is highly relevant today... The subject position of the enunciator, meaning the voice of loveLife or its communicators, is warranted by the need for such an [organisation]. .. The symbols, narratives and metaphors of the organisation possess **receptivity** as shown in the way that these are presented to the receivers of the organisation's communication...[quote from Student 2's response]
- (1.7) The concept of **responsible "safe sex"** is built by means of objects such as advertisements and other media... [Student 2]

In this response, the student commences with evidence of connectivity (cf. 1.5), and then focuses on periodisation and contextualisation as key constructs associated with the circuit of performativity. In the South African, African and global **contexts**, raising vulnerable populations' awareness of HIV/AIDS is a critical first step in countering and changing their high-risk sexual behaviours. In a **period** in which AIDS deaths are escalating daily, the country cannot afford a non-response (or non-receptivity). Given their status, the official managers of the loveLife campaign have **legitimacy** as the stakeholders who are primarily responsible for the roll-out of the awareness-raising drive. Moreover, it would seem that the student's interpretation is that the "symbols, narratives and metaphors" of loveLife are inherently convincing, a view premised on the contestable notion that, as a concept, **responsible "safe sex"** would automatically elicit receptivity. Of course, the preferred evidence of receptivity is that stakeholders express and display a willingness to respond to the concept that has been introduced – there has to be buy-in. However, talk is not enough. In the post-hoc analysis one is looking back from the present at the past – at some point, someone must have thought of the concept **responsible "safe sex"** to be converted into various objects (i.e. a lifestyle magazine, an interactive web site, a campaign, and the like). These objects have become more than tangible objects of evidence; they have also

become symbols of the campaign. These symbols, coupled with the HIV/AIDS awareness narrative, generated on the web site and in the media by various stakeholders, constitute evidence that connectivity has occurred.

In the next phase of their assignment, learners were expected to speculate about loveLife's future, stating how, if they were in charge of the organisation, they would introduce and effect change. The next section outlines very briefly how they used Hardy and Palmer's model to frame their responses to this a priori analysis of imagined future developments.

### **3.2 An a priori analysis of LoveLife - an anticipated future scenario**

The aim of this section of the assignment was not only to prompt learners to envisage the possibilities inherent in the organisation, but also to provide them with the opportunity to apply the model in the context of speculating about organisational change. In a sense, it may be seen as a role-taking exercise akin to DeBono's provocative alternatives, PO thinking, stepping stones and what-if thinking (for an outline of the various tools and techniques of creativity, see De Bono, 1992: 77-229). Proponents of action learning would argue that the focus is on novel connections being made between the theoretical account of the model, imagined future scenarios, and the potential realities encapsulated in the discursive evidence on the web site (Zuber-Skerrit, 2002: 114-124).

For the sake of brevity, the circuits of activity, performativity and connectivity are presented in table form for three students (marked as students 1, 2 and 3). In column 1, the concept introduced by each student is presented; then, in column 2, the anticipated evidence of receptivity in the circuit of performativity is listed. In column 3 are listed sources of evidence of connectivity:

<b>Concepts: circuit of activity</b>	<b>Receptivity: circuit of performativity</b>	<b>Evidence to be sought for the circuit of connectivity</b>
<p><b><u>Student 3:</u></b></p> <p>“Take control of your life” and “best protection is no sex”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In the context of HIV infection rates and the period of disintegrating families and social structures, the concept makes sense.</li> <li>➤ Teenagers would have to show their commitment to the notion that they have a choice and that abstinence is the key.</li> <li>➤ loveLife should become a brand associated with strong and self-assured teenagers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SA teenagers take informed decisions, engaging in sexual activity at a later stage.</li> <li>➤ SA teenagers are aware of the psychological and emotional effects of early sexual activity.</li> <li>➤ SA teenagers know the risks of HIV infection.</li> <li>➤ The incidence of HIV among our youth has to decline.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Student 4:</u></b></p> <p>Increasing the involvement of HIV sufferers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ An HIV sufferers organisation should be formed and will play a critical role.</li> <li>➤ The HIV sufferers’ consent and willingness to participate would be vital.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ HIV sufferers’ active participation would be evidence of connectivity.</li> <li>➤ HIV sufferers share their experiences with the youth on the web site (in the form of frequently asked questions and discussion forums)</li> <li>➤ HIV sufferers’ participation in the awareness campaigns.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Student 5:</u></b></p> <p>Seeking Proudly South African companies to distribute free condoms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The assistance of Proudly South African companies such as Vodacom, Pick ‘n Pay and First National Bank would be requested.</li> <li>➤ Managers of these companies would be sent formal letters requesting assistance with distributing free condoms to customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Proudly SA companies’ active support in the form of their providing and distributing free condoms would be secured.</li> <li>➤ All customers have access to free condoms.</li> </ul>

Other interesting concepts suggested by students included, among others:

- ☒ introducing our youth to the endless possibilities of entrepreneurship which, it was claimed, was a constructive alternative to boredom-relieving unsafe sex;
- ☒ launching a new teenage magazine in South Africa with which teenagers are able to identify, and from which they may obtain information about lifestyles; as well as
- ☒ introducing a morality- and values-based approach to the prevention of HIV.

Most students focused on the stakeholders they would involve, as well as the importance of objects, symbols and narratives related to their concepts. They consistently argued that these sources of evidence of connectivity were contingent on context and period: HIV/AIDS is a scourge relevant as much to the context of Sub-Saharan Africa as to the rest of the world; moreover, in the current period of economic growth and development, this pandemic is certainly relevant as it could compromise many of the positive trends in social and economic development in Africa.

#### **4. FEEDBACK**

In addition to individualised feedback per assignment, the facilitator provided students with the following general feedback on their application of the model.

**Feedback note. The post-hoc analysis:** Part 1 of the assignment was aimed at establishing whether students were able to reverse the sequence of Hardy and Palmer's model, starting with **tangible evidence of connectivity** for a concept introduced earlier by the management team of loveLife. So, you had to show that you could trace back the steps that were followed. You had to work from tangible evidence (connectivity), to **receptivity** (which must have been achieved among all **subjects or stakeholders**), to activity (introducing a **concept** with its associated objects that had the potential to become symbols).

Most, if not all, students showed that they understood the basic distinctions in the model. My comments on this section are brief:

As a minimum, you were required to relate the terms, **object, subject, symbol, and concept**, to loveLife. You had to provide clear definitions, and then establish a clear link with details from the web site. In some cases, students were too vague and did not make the connections between the model and the loveLife facts clear enough. You were required too to refer to **period** and **context** for the concepts you selected.

Any interpretation that included the above and provided additional information such as references to **strategy** and **discursive acts and power** (or any other aspect dealt with in the article) earned you credit.

**The a priori analysis:** In the a priori analysis I looked at your use of the model (based on the points made above). The same criteria applied. Several students provided complicated (i.e. sophisticated) analyses, displaying detail and depth. The main problem here was that students could not envisage the objects that would be produced by stakeholders. In some cases students were too vague. You were required to be adequately informative.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we may argue that the model provides a critical-reflective framework for learners to step away from an organisation, and reflect on the narrative evidence captured in its web site (or any other documentation). This process of reasoning demands deep-level learning which focuses on the consequences in the present of management planning and execution in the past. In a sense, this constructivist "reverse reasoning" requires that learners produce unique personalised responses. Using the model within an action-learning instructional sequence shifting from facilitator-mediated instruction to autonomous learner analysis, the facilitator attempted to establish a learning space in which learners were prompted to generate unique critical-reflective accounts of a completed planning process, with the benefit of identifying those weaknesses in the process that they might avoid in replicating these in real-life change in an organisation.



Second, we may point out that the model allows learners to anticipate future events, envisaging concepts, receptivity, periodisation, contextualisation, symbols, metaphors and connectivity in a novel context. Essentially, learners' thinking is guided by the model so that they may anticipate the tangible evidence which would be yielded by successful change in an organisation (or any other context).

Third, we may focus attention on the reality-based aspect of this approach. The web sites of the organisations analysed in this paper are narrative accounts of significant contributions to wellness in the South African context. Thus, the module was aimed at raising learners' awareness of the socially significant contributions of these organisations in a local context (i.e. CANSA serves cancer patients; and loveLife focuses on changing our youth's attitudes to HIV/AIDS). The student responses, reported on here, yielded narrative accounts of the successes of these organisations – these were individual learner narratives told from the perspective of Hardy and Palmer's model. As important was the aim to use the model as a cue for learners to construct a future scenario, which was contingent (as in the case of the post-hoc analysis) on the learners' ability to manipulate language as a resource. Following CBI methodology, learners were sensitised to the importance of language as a context-embedded vehicle of communication in change management.

Moreover, the approach promotes the development of applied competence. The discourse-based model constitutes theoretical knowledge (i.e. foundational competence), applied in the post-hoc and a priori analyses (i.e. practical application). As learners formulate their thoughts about the two scenarios, they have to argue a case for the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice (i.e. reflexive competence).

Finally, the learners participating in the study did not produce "perfect" interpretations. Several misinterpretations of the model and its focus on tangible discursive evidence occurred, but these instances became teachable moments where the facilitator could engage learners' unique personal constructions in response to the assignments.

**Acknowledgements:** The author should like to thank the EAL332 students of 2004 and 2005 for their active and participative approach to an ongoing project on language as a strategic resource in organisations. The author should also like to thank the reviewers whose constructive comments assisted him in generating this version of the article. It has to be noted though that neither the reviewers nor the University of the Free State are to be held responsible for the views he expresses – these derive from his thinking and research.

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## **APPENDIX A: SAMPLE ANALYSIS - CANSA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When we consider the Cancer Association of South Africa's mission, we notice the key concepts that inform the mission of the organisation. The mission is encapsulated in the following words:

**The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)** will substantially reduce the impact of cancer by promoting health in all communities within South Africa, through advocacy and the sustainable facilitation of research, prevention, early detection and care. CANSA posits the following cancer control components:

- ➔ Health promotion through cancer prevention and early detection.
- ➔ Patient service facilitation.
- ➔ Research to enhance the two points above.

(see CANSA web site at <http://www.cansa.org.za>)

If we apply Hardy and Palmer's model to CANSA, we may argue that several concepts are encapsulated in the mission statement, namely, 'reducing the impact of cancer on the health status of the community', 'advocacy of healthy life-styles in preventing cancer', 'facilitating sustainable research', 'raising awareness of cancer prevention', 'promoting early detection and care', and the like. Let us argue from a post-hoc position, i.e. the circuit of connectivity, tracing the stakeholders' course of action back to the circuit of activity when the concepts were first introduced. In the sections that follow, we consider the concepts, objects and subjects that are relevant to CANSA. These notions are discussed within the framework of Hardy and Palmer's 1998 model.

### **POST-HOC ANALYSIS OF CANSA**

#### **Circuit of connectivity**

As an example, let us take a look at the **circuit of connectivity** for the **concept** 'facilitating sustainable research'. If we click on the research option, we are taken to CANSA's Cancer Research Division web site, a **symbol** of the research objective stated on the CANSA main web-page. We notice the following **objects** which show connectivity. Firstly, the CANSA research mission statement provides the framework for cancer research. The mission statement focuses on objectives such as reducing the

incidence and suffering precipitated by various cancers. Moreover, these objectives focus on high-frequency priority cancers; such research has to be sustainable and reviewed by researchers' peers; and efficient administrative processes have to be in place. These are words and formulations that do not necessarily constitute evidence of connectivity – we need to investigate the web site for further evidence. Indeed, we notice the following announcement:

The CANSA Council of Management has awarded Dr Annie Joubert of the University of Pretoria a Research Grant Award for the best final report for 2003 in respect of her project: **The role of dietary fatty acids and their metabolites in signal transduction and apoptosis induction in cancer cells.**

This is a tangible **object** that confirms connectivity. Indeed, we see on the web site that cancer research is indeed conducted on a large scale. The list contains the names of more than 60 cancer researchers (see the button researchers). When one clicks on the registry button, one is provided with research findings that pertain to the incidence of various cancers in the population groups in South Africa – this is additional tangible evidence (i.e. an **object**) of connectivity. Research has yielded reliable data on the incidence of various cancers in South African populations. Thus, we may argue that CANSA's research division engages in **activities and practices** that yield **objects** that confirm **connectivity**. They also **voice** their position – the discursive activity in the web site reinforces the concept that they have activated.

It is interesting to note that researchers in strategic management regard CANSA as one of the most effective organisations of its kind in the world. Ehlers and Lazenby (2004: 285) focus attention on the effectiveness and efficiency of CANSA in the Free State and the Northern Cape in South Africa, as well as the rest of Africa:

The wealth of experience of 49 motivated staff and 1 968 trained patient service volunteers has assisted Cansa Free State/Northern Cape to become a leader in the health fraternity within the region. Cansa also plays an important role in promoting cancer education in Africa and is regarded as the most effective organisation of such a nature in the developing world.

### **Circuit of performativity**

Let us consider the **circuit of performativity**. The CANSA Management Council must have established a system that could sustain the research projects that were going to be conducted in the research division. Indeed, **CANSA's Cancer Research Division** was established as a **symbol** of the **concept 'facilitating sustainable research'**. There was **receptivity** for the concept of **'facilitating sustainable research'** as several researchers showed an interest. Indeed, this not-for-gain section 21 company has been able to sustain its functions since its inception in 1931. Moreover, as far as research backing is concerned, the site provides information about researchers (who are currently receptive to the notion of research), and a registry which contains important research findings that pertain to the incidence of cancers among the various population groups, and the public would find this information useful, and consequently, they would also be receptive to the concept. The list of researchers shows that there was indeed **receptivity** for the **concept** of cancer research, which manifested, among others, in **connectivity** shown in the **registry-recorded findings** (i.e. and **object**). Given that the research process can only happen once funds have been secured, current and prospective researchers have to be able to apply for such research funds. These procedures are outlined in the web site of the Research Division.

### **Circuit of activity**

At some point CANSA management – perhaps years ago (the details are not stated in the web site) – must have seen the medical fraternity as an important stakeholder in preventing cancer. For that reason, it could have been argued that medical doctors had to be supported in their research as their work was – and is still – seen as useful in the prevention and early detection of the disease. Someone must have thought of the **concept 'facilitating sustainable research'**, and imagined that a Cancer Research Division was an appropriate **symbol** that could be associated with the concept and various **objects**, i.e.

business plans to establish the division, letters requesting sponsorships for research, letters to researchers to gauge their interest, and the like, in pursuit of the objective.

## AN A PRIORI ANALYSIS OF CHANGE IN CANSA

If I had to implement change in CANSA, I would pursue the following steps, which are consistent with Hardy and Palmer's model.

### Circuit of activity

I would select the **concept 'bolstering the number of volunteers from the population of university students'**. I anticipate that substantial growth in the number of volunteers (i.e. **subjects**) entering the services of the organisation would occur. I would establish the *University Students' CANSA Volunteer Organisation* to serve as a **symbol** of the concept. I would use the following **objects** in pursuing the concept in action. First, I would submit a formal written request for support to the CANSA Management Council, and a letter to the rectors of local tertiary institutions to seek their assistance. Thus, the **subjects** would also include the CANSA Management Council, and the Top Managements of the tertiary institutions in the region.

### Circuit of performativity

I would send the documents to the various stakeholders and set up meetings to seek their assistance and blessing. If they agreed, that would be a sign of **receptivity** for the **concept 'bolstering the number of volunteers from the population of university students'** – indeed, if the rector of the local university responds promptly, informing me that a *CANSA University Student Volunteers* organisation will be formed, I could argue that there has been receptivity for the concept. **Practices and activities** at the university would then include this new university organisation. The organisation would also be mentioned in the discourses on campus. If students responded positively, this would be further evidence that was likely to occur.



## Circuit of connectivity

Once student volunteers' numbers were boosted significantly and they turned up for volunteer training, we could argue that the discursive processes have indeed "taken" and that **connectivity** has been achieved.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, let us take a look at the argument and analysis presented above. We showed that Hardy and Palmer's model may be used in assessing current events and tracing the origins of concepts from the circuit of connectivity to performativity and activity. In addition, we may state that the **subjects** involved in the **post-hoc analysis** are CANSA's Council of Management, research team management (i.e. the research co-ordinator, and the research administrator), donors and sponsors, the public, volunteers and patients. The **objects** deriving from our concept would be the research division's activities and research output, while the **Research Division** itself could be seen as a **symbol** of the **concept 'facilitating sustainable research'**. Similarly, in the **a priori analysis**, we could identify **subjects** such as rectors, students and patients, articulating their concerns (i.e. **new voices**) and engaging in **new practices and activities** as they pursued connectivity between the **concept 'bolstering the number of volunteers from university students'**, and its **symbol**, the student volunteer organisation, by means of **objects** (i.e. letters requesting support from CANSA management and tertiary institutions' top managements, and other discursive activities).

Of course, this is the ideal world – we do not know whether 'lack of connectivity' occurred in the scenario outlined in the post-hoc analysis. What we see in the web sites are the outcomes of planning processes that must have experienced hiccups. We have to bear in mind that when we convert a strategy into a plan, we have to know that unplanned results will prompt us to return to our strategy and plan for purposes of adapting them to cope with the unexpected.

<p>Willfred Greyling works as an applied linguist in the Department of English and Classical Languages at the University of the Free State. His interests include discourse analysis, specifically the study of classroom, psychotherapeutic and news interview interaction. He has been involved in teacher training as well as language development courses at the UFS for approximately 20 years.</p>	<p>Prof. W.J. Greyling Department of English and Classical Languages University of the Free State P.O. Box 339 Bloemfontein 9300 greywj.hum@mail.uovs.ac.za</p>
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